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ABSTRACT

This action research project implemented and evaluated a 10-week conflict resolution program to improve the behavior of fifth- and eighth-grade students. Participating were eighth graders from a large suburban school district with a diverse socioeconomic background, and fifth graders from a growing suburban school district with a high mobility rate. The problems of inappropriate behaviors for resolving personal conflicts were documented through discipline referrals, teacher journal entries, teacher surveys, and student self-assessment. The solution strategies were comprised of cooperative learning groups, conflict resolution training, and character education activities conducted for 25 to 45 minutes each day for 3 or 5 days per week. Activities were related to building trust of other group members, developing social skills, solving problems, resolving conflict, and expressing feelings. Post-intervention results indicated that teaching skills conducive to appropriate behaviors for resolving personal conflict decreased the number of negative behaviors displayed in the classroom, such as loud or abusive language and lack of respect for others. Discipline referrals declined throughout the intervention period. Student assessments revealed a decrease in all negative responses to conflict and an increase in nonviolent responses. (Fourteen appendices include data collection instruments and sample learning activities. Contains 14 references.) (KB)

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IMPROVING STUDENT BEHAVIORS THROUGH THE USE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN FIFTH AND EIGHTH GRADES

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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Dedication

We would like to dedicate this research paper to Derrick.

Now mom can stay home on Monday nights.

Also, to Debi's Dad and Karyn's Grandma who know the value of education.

ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for developing conflict resolution techniques for eighth and fifth grade students. The targeted population at school A consists of eighth grade students in a large suburban school district with a diverse socioeconomic background. School B consists of fifth grade students in a growing suburban school district with a high mobility rate. The problems of inappropriate behaviors for resolving personal conflicts were documented through discipline referrals, teacher journal entries, teacher surveys and student self assessment.

Analysis of probable cause data indicated the problem was related to: lack of character education, poor social skills, high mobility rates, students viewing too much violence on television and socioeconomic status of students.

Solution strategies consisted of implementing cooperative learning groups, conflict resolution techniques, and character education activities.

Post intervention data indicated that teaching skills conducive to appropriate behaviors for resolving personal conflict will decrease the the number of negative behaviors displayed in the classroom.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students targeted are a junior high school eighth grade group and an elementary school fifth grade group who exhibit behaviors inappropriate to resolve their personal conflicts. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes discipline referrals, teacher journal entries that describe student behaviors, observational checklists of students social skills, and teacher and student surveys.

Immediate Problem Context

School A

School A is a seventh and eighth grade junior high. Total enrollment is 696. Of this enrollment , 2.2 % are from low-income families. Low-income families are defined as families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public aid, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Two percent of the student population were found to be eligible for bilingual education. The racial / ethnic background of School A is 81.9% White, 3.2% Black, 6.0% Hispanic, 8.6% Asian / Pacific Islander, and .3% Native American. The percentage of students in self-contained special education classrooms is 4.5%. The student mobility rate is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave a school during a school year. Student mobility for School A is 9.2%. The attendance rate is 96.1% with no chronic truancy to report. The average class size is 20.1 students. This number is derived by dividing the total enrollment for a grade by the number of classes for that grade as reported on the first school day in May (School Report Card A,1996).

The faculty and staff at School A is comprised of 62 teachers, 8 custodians, and 6 instructional assistants. Not included in the teacher count is one psychologist, one

social worker, and one speech pathologist. School A also employs three full time secretaries, an assistant principal, and principal. The racial / ethnic background of the teaching staff is 97% White and 3% Hispanic (School Report Card A,1996). The staff has between 1 and 29 years of experience in the field of teaching.

School A is a 30 year old single level building. Over the last 30 years there have been three additions to the building due to increases in enrollment and the introduction of new programs. Many classrooms do not have windows to the outside, while some have skylights.

Special programs at School A include self-contained learning and behavior disordered (L.D. and B.D.). Less severe L.D. and B.D. students meet with resource teachers one to three periods a day. There are also self-contained mild to moderate mentally impaired (MMI) and multiple needs (MN) classrooms. The MN includes autistic, behavioral disordered, learning disabled, as well as, emotionally disturbed students.

The academic program at School A includes math, language arts, science, social studies and physical education. Elective classes for students in School A are French, Spanish, general music, chorus and art, in both the seventh and eighth grades. Eighth graders have technology education and life skills classes. Some electives are offered in full-year and semester curriculums so students may sample or study more in depth. According to the School Report Card 1996 the operating expenditure per pupil is $6,710.00.

School B

School B is an elementary school comprised of kindergarten through fifth grade. Total enrollment is 712. Of this enrollment 0.7% are low-income families. Less than two percent of the student population were found eligible for bilingual education. The racial / ethnic background of School B is 82.1% White, 7% Black, 3.4% Hispanic and

7.45 Asian / Pacific Islander. Student mobility is 16.8 %. The attendance rate is 96.2% with no chronic truancy. The average class size is 20.8 for kindergarten, 26.8 for first, second and third grade, and 20.6 for fourth and fifth grade.

The faculty and staff of School B is comprised of 34 teachers, 3 custodians, 13 instructional assistants. Not included in teacher count is one psychologist, one social worker, one and a half speech pathologists, two learning resource facilitators, and one behavioral specialist. School B also employs one secretary, a health aide, and a principal. The racial / ethnic background of the teaching staff is 99% White and 1% Black (School Report Card B,1996). The staff has between 1 and 27 years of experience in the field of teaching.

School B is a two-story, eight year old building. An addition was added one and a half years ago. All classrooms have windows. The building surrounds a Learning Media Center (LMC). Off the LMC is a single-story primary wing.

School B is a full inclusion school. Identified students receive individual help when needed. Severe cases have full-time aides.

All students receive art, music and physical education classes. Fourth and fifth graders are offered before school programs including, chorus, orchestra, band, art club and intramural sports. According to the School Report Card 1996 the operating expenditure per pupil is $5,381.00.

The Community Setting

Community A

Community A is the largest elementary school district in a Midwestern state. It serves seven communities in a 31 square mile area. It has a student population of over 16,000. The district is as diverse as it is large. Over 600 students are served by the district's bilingual program. A total of 38 different languages are spoken by students (School Report Card A,1996).

Enrollment has had an annual increase of 150 students since 1985. The diversity of the students has caused a need for the development of the bilingual program. Only 3.9% of the total enrollment is limited-English proficient. Low-income students make up 3.7% of the total enrollment.

Community A has a population of 127,625, according to the 1990 census. A breakdown of the ethnicity is as follows: 89 % White, 2 % Black, 1 % Hispanic, 7 % Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1% Native American. The median family income is $54,591.

School and community issues that are currently being addressed are increasing parental involvement, and increasing involvement between businesses and local government with the district. Another issue being scrutinized is the use of police officers in the junior high schools. The school resource officer is used in many different capacities, as a deterrent for inappropriate behaviors to making actual arrests for drugs, firearms and thefts. The school resource officer also helps keep peace in the schools through avenues such as gang awareness and peer mediation.

Community B

The school district in community B is comprised of 13 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 1 high school. The district serves a portion of two communities in a 46 square mile area. It has a population of over 15,500 students. Low-income families make up 1.5% of the total enrollment.

Community B has a population of 101,769, according to the 1990 census. A breakdown in ethnicity is as follows: 74 % White, 11 % Black, 12 % Hispanic, less than 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1% Native American. The median family income is $48,774.

Enrollment has tripled since 1989. This has caused the need for the development of more schools. School and community issues currently being

addressed are the need for more schools to meet the growth of the community. This has lead to the issue of boundary changes. Another priority is the supervision and safety of the elementary students during the school day. In addition, schools have started forming business partnerships to help with the financial needs of the district.

National Context of the Problem

Behavioral problems stemming from lack of character education and conflict resolution skills plague every school in every community across the country - affluent and poor, rural and urban. Educators can help schools, homes and communities overcome the epidemic of violence that is being seen (Lettes, 1994).

To teach nonviolence, educators must model nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts. Students need to see their educators behave decently and with integrity (Charney, 1994).

Lessening conflict for everyone starts with developing tolerance for differences and respecting one another's feelings and needs. There are many programs throughout the country being adopted and integrated into all curricular areas. According to Lettes (1994) consistent and continuous teaching of pro-social behavior and conflict resolution will help students become life-long mediators, not predators.

Conflict is a part of life, and would not be eliminated if it could be. Finding ways to end the violence between two diverse groups is of the utmost urgency to end unnecessary pain and suffering (Lantieri, 1995).

The National Education Association (as cited by Wolfe, 1995) reports that the number of children killed by firearms between 1979 and 1991 equals the number of Americans killed in the Vietnam War; every two hours, a child dies from gunshots. A 1993 Harris Survey (as cited by Wolfe, 1995) reveals that 22% of students polled claimed they took weapons to school in the previous school year.

When faced with the prevalence of violence and children involved with firearms

there arises a need for a program to teach skills to deal with the violence. As stated there are programs being used to deal with conflict.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

To document the inappropriate behaviors exhibited by students to resolve their personal conflicts, records consisting of a social skills checklist (see Appendix A), discipline referral forms (see Appendix B), a teacher questionnaire (see Appendix C), and a student self-assessment (see Appendix D) were used. Behaviors were observed over a period of two weeks and recorded on the checklist. The results are totaled in Table 1.

Table 1

Categories and Number of Incidents Sept. 9,1996 Through Sept.13,1996

Behavior Category	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
Loud Language	39	20
Abusive Language	16	12
Physical Fighting	1	2
Unable to Work Cooperatively	24	15
Lack of Respect for Others	30	20

Of the 72 students in both schools, 20 were consistently involved in inappropriate behaviors and social skills while trying to resolve their conflicts. A behavior documentation sheet was used by the researchers (Appendix A) to aid in the recording process.

Of the 100 incidents recorded during the 3 week period, 28 % of the students in the targeted classes displayed inappropriate behaviors to resolve their conflicts.

Negative behavior that was displayed frequently by a student was recorded on a discipline referral slip (see Appendix B). Totals on the discipline referral slips were recorded in Table 2.

Table 2

Categories and Numbers of Discipline Referrals from Sept. 1 through Sept. 20, 1996

Behavior Category	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
Failing to keep to self	20	15
Disruption of class	12	10
Disrespect for authority	2	2
Obscene language	6	6
Disrespect for property	5	5
Insubordination	8	8
Defacing property	0	0
Disruption of learning	6	6

A teacher questionnaire (see Appendix C) was administered to confirm the problem, identify where and when the conflicts were occurring, how the conflicts were handled and how much class time is spent on discipline. Eighty-one teachers were given the survey. Forty-six were completed and tabulated. Results of the teacher questionnaire are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Teacher Questionnaire about Conflict

Question	Less than 20%	20%-40%	40%-60%	60%-80%	More than 80%
Time spent on Discipline	31 (67%)	15 (33%)	1(2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Question	In the Hall	In the Yard	In the Classroom	In the Lunchroom
Where do most conflict at your school occur	23 (50%)	17 (37%)	4 (9%)	2 (4%)

Question	During Passing Periods	During Lunch	Before School	After School
When do most conflicts occur	22 (48%)	15 (33%)	5 (11%)	4 (9%)

The student self assessment (Appendix D) was tabulated in Table 4. Students saw themselves addressing conflicts inappropriately. Most often, when a conflict arises, yelling starts. Of the 72 students, 60% felt that some of the time they would yell, and 20% felt that they often yelled or threatened the other person. Although "often" was marked more frequently for negative responses, 20% of the students marked "often" for the positive behaviors.

Table 4

Student preintervention self-assessment of conflict resolution

Response	Often	Sometimes	Never
Yell back or threaten	14 (19%)	43 (59%)	15 (20%)
Avoid or ignore the person	29 (40%)	31 (43%)	12 (16%)
Complain to an adult	7 (10%)	37 (51%)	28 (38%)
Call the other person names	21 (29%)	26 (36%)	25 (34%)
Try to reach a compromise	14 (19%)	46 (63%)	12 (16%)
Let an adult decide who is right	14 (19%)	36 (50%)	22 (30%)
Talk to find ways to agree	12 (16%)	40 (55%)	20 (27%)
Hit or push back	18 (25%)	23 (31%)	31 (43%)
Cry	1 (1%)	19 (20%)	52 (72%)

Although students saw themselves addressing conflicts inappropriately, they chose verbal confrontation as a response more than they chose physical aggression to solve the conflict. The majority of answers to each response fell in the sometimes column. This shows that students have tried many different ways of trying to solve their conflicts. The response to sometimes shows a need for a conflict resolution program.

Probable Causes

There are numerous possible reasons for the problem of inappropriate behaviors. Data indicates the problem may be related to lack of character education, poor social skills, and/or poor conflict resolution techniques. A lack of positive role models, inadequate adult supervision, and disintegration of the nuclear family structure will probably result in inappropriate behaviors for resolving conflicts. Other contributing factors may include a changing socioeconomic status, violence depicted on television, gangs, and drugs.

The targeted students reside in middle class suburbs. Some of the families of the students are in states of transition. They are experiencing divorce, deaths, step-families, and blended families. The list of changing family structure could go on forever.

The literature suggests several causes for students displaying inappropriate behaviors. Reasons for conflicts among our nations young children are vast. According to the magazine, Teaching Pre K - 8 (1994), the evening news reports daily presence of handguns at school, stabbings over professional team sportswear, and gang attacks. Teachers should teach pro-social behavior, discuss differences, and respect one another's feelings and needs. By doing this, students can naturally avoid conflict.

Lickona (1993) states television and movie screens are filled with sleazy beckoning the young. The 1992 report of the National Research Council (cited by Lickona,1993) states the United States is now the most violent of all industrialized nations. Cohen (1995) suggests the media is an underlying cause for todays violence. Sarason (cited in Cohen, 1995) reports that Americans, eight to fifteen years old, spend approximately four hours watching television daily. Toufaxis (cited in Cohen, 1995) reports those same children will have witnessed 200,000 acts of violence on

television by the time they are sixteen. Prothrow-Stith (cited in Cohen, 1995) agrees that by portraying violence as a "glamorous, effective and entertaining method of resolving disputes," (p. 4) the media normalizes and implicitly advocates its use.

Literature also suggests the changing family structure as cause for more conflict. Lickona (1993) reports children of single mothers are more likely to be poorer and have emotional and behavioral problems. Hewlitt (1991) and Fuchs (1988) (as cited in Cohen, 1995) contends children spend 10 to 12 hours less time with their parents each week than children in 1960. It is not unusual for children coming home from school to be without adult supervision for several hours. Older brothers or sisters act as care givers for younger siblings (Williams, 1995).

Socioeconomic status is also regarded as a cause for increased conflicts. West (1992) Hewlitt (1991) and Newman (1988) (as cited by Cohen, 1995) all report that more than half of all Americans have experienced a decline in their standard of living since the early 1980's. Edelman (cited by Cohen, 1995) states, one in seven citizens falls below the threshold the federal government uses to define poverty. Many are barely above that threshold.

Mobility rates, students moving frequently, are another cause for the stated problem. This creates a lack of stability and hinders the student from creating positive, healthy bonds with other students (Williams, 1995).

Character education has declined since the 1960's. According to Lickona (1993), the sixties was a time of personalism. Personalism protested societal oppression and injustice, but it delegitimized moral authority. Self - centered people tend to be in conflict more often with themselves and others. Since that time,society has never truly gotten back on track with teaching character.

A review of probable causes gathered from the sites and the literature, presented evidence that the media, socioeconomic status, changing family structure,

mobility rates, and lack of character education contribute to the problem of students exhibiting behaviors inappropriate to resolve their personal conflicts. These combined forces place stress upon children which increase the likelihood of involvement in conflicts, that will be handled in an inappropriate manner.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

After reviewing the literature on conflict resolution techniques, researchers and experts suggested several strategies for the problem of inappropriate behaviors to resolve personal conflicts. The strategies include using cooperative learning to enhance social skills, character education to develop ethical morals and values, and conflict resolution programs to improve problem solving skills.

Interactions with other human beings is the way to learn social skills (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1992). Vygotsky (1962), Johnson and Johnson (1978), Slavin (1983), Kagan (1977), Sharan and Sharan (1976) (cited by Bellanca & Fogarty, 1992) support the principle of a strong positive relationship between the ability to think critically, to perform higher order thinking, and to think more creatively when learning occurs in group settings. These skills could then be used to learn appropriate behaviors for resolving personal conflicts.

According to Williams (1995), cooperative learning has positive effects on behavior. Joyce, Weil, and Showers, Johnson and Johnson, Slavin, and Sharan (as cited by Williams, 1995) show that through cooperative learning empathy for others was developed as well as positive feelings toward themselves and others.

Bellanca & Fogarty (1992) believe higher level thinking is enhanced when group members listen, value individual contributions, take another's point of view, partake in a variety of group roles, achieve consensus and resolve conflicts. Cooperative learning strategies, techniques, and lessons build the skills needed to help students resolve conflicts peaceably. Kreidler (as cited by Bodine, Crawford & Schrumpf, 1994) lists five qualities needed for peaceable classrooms:

1. cooperation

2. communication
3. tolerance
4. positive emotional expression
5. conflict resolution

The first has already been addressed. Communication, tolerance, and positive emotional expression are all backed by the character education movement. Lemming (1993) states that through cooperative learning students learn to get along better with student of other races and ethnic groups, they were more accepting of differences in others, demonstrated greater mutual concern for one another, and were more likely to engage in pro-social behavior.

Lemming (1993) refers to the Jefferson Center for Character Education. This program attempts to teach the language of values. Honesty, perseverance, respect, and tolerance are its goals. The program emphasizes recognizing and practicing appropriate behaviors. Satnick (as cited by Lemming, 1993) surveyed school administrators to assess the program's effectiveness. The administrators stated that all forms of reported discipline problems had decreased, parents became more involved in schools, and students were acting more responsibly.

Bodine, Crawford and Scrumpf (1994) write that conflicts need to be identified, managed, and resolved in ways that allow each individual to satisfy his or her basic needs. Cohen (1995) believes a desire to meet basic psychological needs often motivates people's behavior during interpersonal conflicts. Once the students understand that an interpersonal conflict is not meeting their basic human needs for recognition and control, they can usually resolve their conflict.

Cooperative learning, character education, and conflict resolution techniques added into the curriculums will help students become better life-long learners. They will have more tolerance for differences among people, and be more accepting to new

ideas.

Project Objective and Process Statements

As a result of implementing conflict resolution techniques, during the period of September 1996 to December 1996, the fifth and eighth grade target groups will increase appropriate social skills to resolve personal conflicts, as measured by a decrease in student discipline referrals and teacher journal entries.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following strategic procedures are proposed:

1. Students will be taught social skills while working in cooperative learning groups.
2. Students will be introduced to character education activities.
3. A series of learning activities that address conflict resolution will be taught.

Project Action Plan

The program will start in the middle of September with a survey of the students and teachers at each site. School A and school B are on different daily schedules. In school A the students meet with the teacher 5 days per week for 45 minutes each day. In school B the students meet with the teacher for 3 days per week for 25 minutes each day.

The intervention will start with Cooperative Learning/Team Building, and the second half will focus on Conflict Resolution skills. The intervention will continue until the middle of December, Christmas break

Week 1: Teacher observational checklist of social skills

Week 2: a) Introduction lesson to cooperative learning/team building

b) Heterogeneous grouping activities c) Social skills lesson

Week 3: a) Introduction to Trust Building b) Group activities

Week 4: a) Introduction to Problem Solving b) activities involving problem solving

Week 5: Teacher observational checklist of social skills

During the Cooperative learning/Team Building activities from Glower and Muddier (1992) book Team Building through Physical Challenges will be used, also activities from the book Blueprints for Thinking in the Cooperative Classroom by Bellanca and Fogarty (1990) will be used.

Week 6: a) Introduce Conflict Resolution b) Define conflict through discussion c) Use role playing to show different kinds of conflict d) Define cool off through discussion

Week 7: a) Discuss how to express feelings b) Use the "I message" to help express feelings c) Discuss how to be a good listener

Week 8: a) Discuss what brainstorming means b) Write list of brainstorm ideas for resolving conflicts in class

Week 9: Teacher observational checklist of social skills

During conflict resolution the five lesson approach used in the book Talk it out by Porro (1994) will be used. Role playing activities from the book to help explain each step will be used throughout the lessons.

Week 10: Use some advanced team building activities

Week 11: Use 2 activities from Pyres book

Week 12: Teacher observational checklist of social skills

Week 13: Teacher and student post surveys

Methods of Assessment

A teacher questionnaire, an observational checklist, and a student self-assessment will be used before the intervention is started to help determine the extent of the problem. During the intervention, to help chart the progress, teacher journal entries and observational checklists will be reviewed. The number of discipline referrals will also be charted. This information will be obtained from the school office

records. Direct observation of weekly group activities will help to chart progress of the intervention. Teacher post-intervention surveys will be used to determine if students transferred techniques learned into real-life situations.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this research project was to reduce inappropriate and disruptive behaviors among fifth and eighth graders resolving their personal conflicts. The procedures that were implemented to effect the desired change included the following: cooperative learning components and strategies followed by character education activities and conflict resolution techniques.

Cooperative learning was used to stress positive social skills and tolerance toward one another. Students were allowed to form groups of their own, at first, and were engaged in team building activities. An observational checklist (Appendix A) was used by the teacher to assess social skills demonstrated by the students. Samples of these activities can be found in Appendices G, H and I. Some activities were nonacademic and provided students time to get better acquainted with each other.

Group formations were then changed using color-coded cards, counting off, and alphabetizing. This created more heterogeneous groups of students with varying abilities and personal characteristics. The observational checklist was used four times throughout the intervention to assess the skills of the students.

Character education activities enhanced the cooperative learning activities and cooperative learning activities enhanced the character education activities. Many of the skills in character education were similar to skills already implemented during cooperative learning. The character education skills focused upon included taking responsibility for one's own actions, respecting each other, and being a good citizen. Researchers explained and taught the attitude and characteristics students were to demonstrate. Researchers also modeled behaviors, attitudes and characteristics that

were seen as necessary for a peaceable environment. Students were held accountable for their choices. Limits were set by researchers and consequences were levied if students overstepped the boundaries. Examples of these activities may be found in appendices J, K and L. Again, some activities were not academic in nature.

The last section to be implemented was conflict resolution techniques. Lessons from the program, Talk it Out (Porro,1994), were implemented once a week for six weeks. Examples of these activities can be found in Appendix M and N.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The project intervention was evaluated and recorded on a social skills checklist showing the negative skills displayed by students. The data presented in Table 6 shows the categories, number of times students displayed consistent negative behaviors and the number of students involved in those incidents. Some students were previously identified by researchers as displaying more negative behaviors consistently than other students.

Table 5

Comparisons of the Observational Checklists

	Obs. 1		Obs. 2		Obs. 3		Obs. 4		Obs. 5	
Behavior Category	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Loud Language	39	20	35	18	28	15	15	10	25	14
Abusive Language	16	12	12	10	8	5	3	3	2	1
Physical Fighting	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3
Unable to Work Cooperatively	24	15	20	14	12	8	8	5	16	8
Lack of Respect for Others	30	20	20	15	16	11	9	7	5	4

1 - Number of Incidents 2 - Number of Students Involved

The project's intervention seems to have had a positive effect on all behaviors and social skills that were targeted until the week before winter recess. At that time there was a rise three of the five targeted behaviors. During the intervention negative behaviors in some categories decreased 100%. Some decreases were only 38%. The number of students involved in the negative behaviors decreased in every category throughout the intervention including the final week. The ending result being there were less students involved in fewer incidents. Figure 1 shows a comparison of three of the observed behaviors. Two of the behaviors, abusive language and lack of respect show a continuous decrease. The third, loud language, decreased until the last observation.

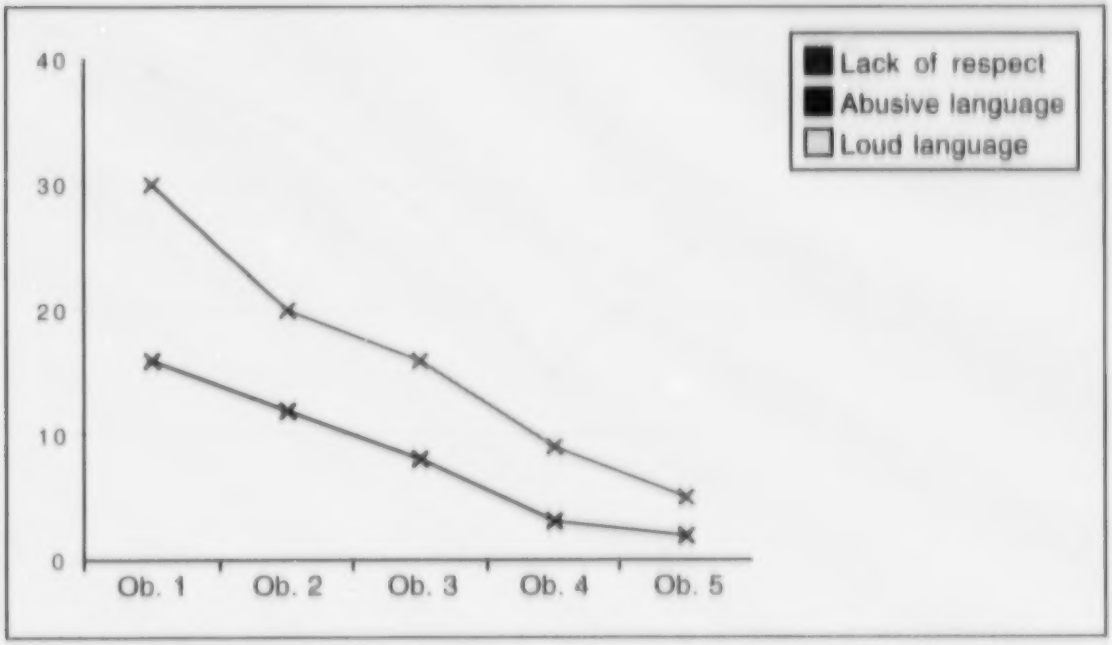

Figure 1: Observational Trends

The researchers believe the behaviors graphed decreased because of the intervention strategies used. The third behavior graphed increased slightly. The researchers attribute this to the time of the year, the week before winter break.

Discipline referrals to the office decreased throughout the whole intervention period. Table 6 shows the discipline referrals the last three weeks of the intervention. When these are compared with the numbers on Table 2 a decrease is shown.

Table 6

Categories and Numbers of Discipline Referrals from Dec. 1, 1996 - Dec. 20, 1996

Behavior Category	Number of Incidents	Number of Students
Failing to keep to self	10	8
Disruption of class	6	4
Disrespect for authority	0	0
Obscene language	2	2
Disrespect for property	1	1
Insubordination	2	2
Defacing property	0	0
Disruption of learning	0	0

The last comparison of data gathered during the project is a post intervention self assessment done by the students on how they view themselves responding to conflict. The results of Table 7 show a decrease in all negative responses to conflict and an increase in nonviolent responses.

Table 7

Student post intervention self-assessment of conflict resolution

Response	Often	Sometimes	Never
Yell back or threaten	5 (6%)	42 (58%)	25 (34%)
Avoid or ignore the person	32 (44%)	32 (44%)	8 (11%)
Complain to an adult	10 (13%)	42 (58%)	20 (27%)
Call the other person names	10 (13%)	30 (41%)	32 (44%)
Try to reach a compromise	33 (45%)	31 (43%)	8 (11%)
Let an adult decide who is right	17 (23%)	37 (31%)	18 (25%)
Talk to find ways to agree	20 (27%)	45 (62%)	7 (7%)
Hit or push back	3 (4%)	13 (18%)	46 (63%)
Cry	1 (1%)	5 (11%)	66 (91%)

When responses from Table 7 were compared with the responses in Table 4 students saw themselves as addressing conflicts more appropriately in December than in September. Students were more likely to try to reach a compromise or talk to find ways to agree than use a violent type response such as hitting or threatening.

Figure 2 compares the student pre and post evaluation of four categories. The self evaluation shows students seeing themselves handling conflict differently. The four categories chosen to compare show students behaving in a less aggressive

manner than before the intervention are: reach a compromise, talk it out, hit or push back, yell back or threaten.

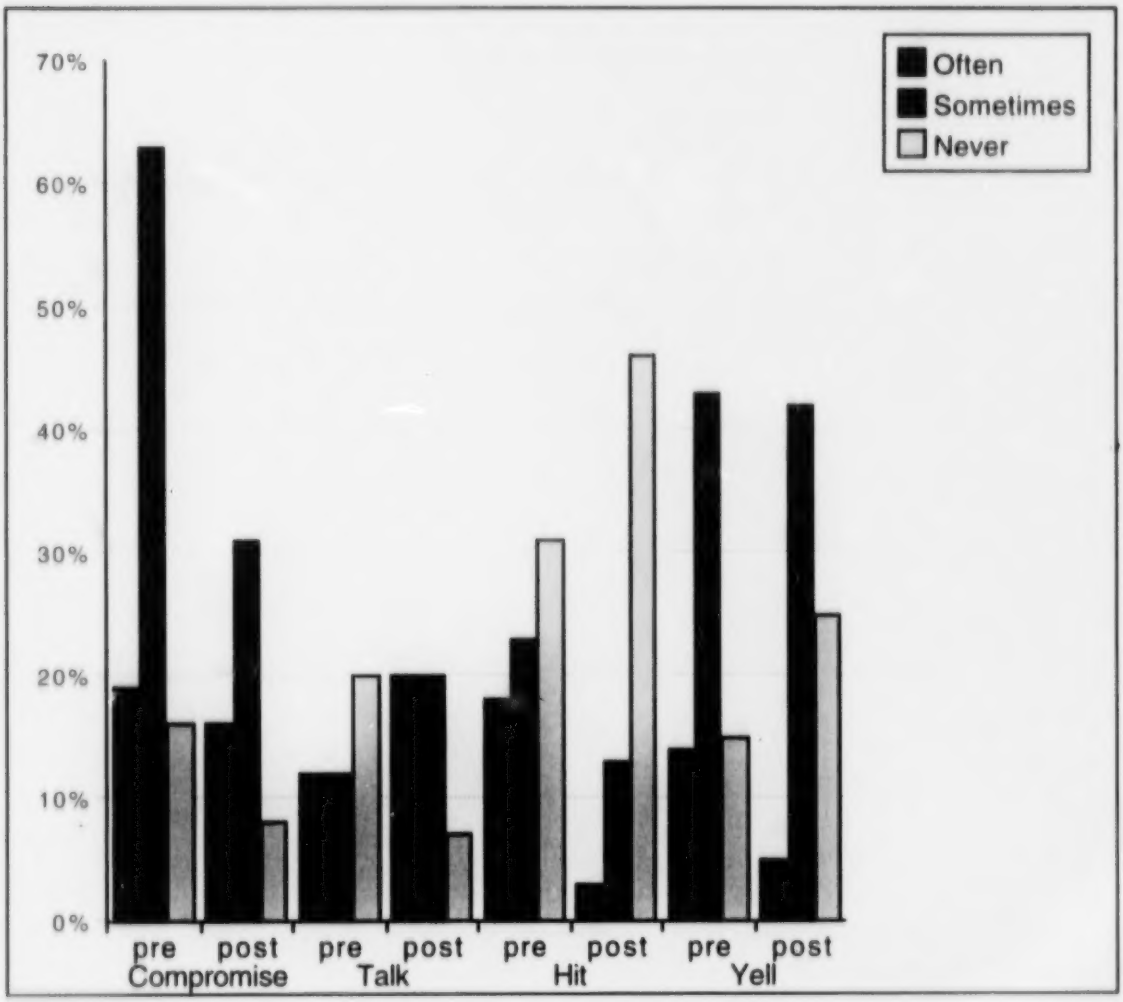

Figure 2: Comparison of pre and post self assessment

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the data, the intervention strategies that the researchers employed were effective in increasing appropriate behaviors to resolve personal conflicts. There was improvement in the manner in which students addressed conflict and the way they interacted with each other. The researchers believe if more activities using conflict resolution strategies were integrated into the curriculum more consistently the increase in appropriate behaviors displayed by students would be even more dramatic. The researchers also feel that if cooperative learning strategies, character education and conflict resolution techniques were implemented throughout the school, in every classroom, more often, students would benefit immensely. The researchers feel that the action research project was successful on its attempt to change behaviors in the classroom. One part the researchers would change is to try to incorporate more activities into their curricular area instead of general activities to enhance specific targeted behaviors.

The researchers believe in the importance of this intervention and will continue to use lessons and activities to enhance the lives of the children in their classrooms. Their hope is that other educators will follow suit and use these type of activities also.

The researchers would recommend for all schools to adopt some sort of program to help students become more tolerant and more aware of their actions and reactions to others. It is their hope that by teaching nonviolent ways of dealing with conflict at an early age students will be able to transfer the knowledge and behaviors learned to their personal life and become a successful member of society.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Observational Checklist

Observation Checklist
Week _____

Behavior/ Social Skill	M	T	W	Th	F
Loud Language					
Abusive Language					
Physical Fighting					
Unable to work cooperatively					
Lacking respect for rights of others					

Tally marks for the number of occurances during a class period.

Appendix B
Discipline Referral

STUDENT DISCIPLINE REPORT

STUDENT: _____ **7 - 8**

TEACHER: _____ **DATE:** _____

ONE POINT	TWO POINTS	THREE POINTS
1. Unprepared for class	1. Disrespect for authority	1. Stealing
2. Tardy	2. Hallway misconduct	2. Forging signature
3. Failure to follow directions	3. Dress code violation	3. Insubordination
4. Failing to keep to yourself	4. Inappropriate materials	4. Cheating on exams
5. No food, gum	5. Misuse of lockers	5. Gang colors, symbols
6. Cruising, running	6. Display of affection	6. Bus conduct
7. Signed material	7. Obscene language	7. Defacing property
8. Copying work	8. Disrespect for property	8. Misuse of hall pass
9. Disruption of class	9. After school activity	9. Disrupting learning
0. Other	0. Other	0. Other

COMMENTS _____

_____

Appendix C
Teacher Questionnaire

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is for our research paper for St. Xavier University. Please fill out and return to the teacher in your building. Thank you for your help.

Debra Baker Karyn Lanham

1. How much class time do you spend on Discipline? (Circle one)

   A. Less than 20%

   B. 20% - 40%

   C. 40% - 60%

   D. 60%-80%

   E. More than 80%

2. Where do most conflicts at this school occur?

   A. In the yard
   B. In the lunchroom
   C. In the classroom
   D. In the hall

3. When do most conflicts occur?

   A. Before school
   B. During lunch
   C. After school
   D. During passing periods

4. What are most of the conflicts between students about?

   A.

   B.

   C.

Appendix D
Student Self-Assessment

How I Respond to Conflict

INSTRUCTIONS: Put a check mark in the boxes that show the responses that are most typical for you when you are in conflict with another person. Then circle the three responses you normally make first in a conflict.

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
Yell back or threaten the person	☐	☐	☐
Avoid or ignore the person	☐	☐	☐
Change the subject	☐	☐	☐
Try to understand the other side	☐	☐	☐
Complain to an adult	☐	☐	☐
Call the other person names	☐	☐	☐
Let the person have his or her way	☐	☐	☐
Try to reach a compromise	☐	☐	☐
Let an adult decide who is right	☐	☐	☐
Talk to find ways to agree	☐	☐	☐
Apologize	☐	☐	☐
Hit or push back	☐	☐	☐
Cry	☐	☐	☐
Make it into a joke	☐	☐	☐
Pretend my feelings are not hurt	☐	☐	☐

Appendix E
Consent Form

Student Consent Form

Saint Xavier University Field Based Master's Program
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
"Conflict Resolution"

The purpose of this study is to determine fifth and eighth graders skills in solving interpersonal conflicts. The study is being done by Ms. Lanham. The information you provide will help to implement a program for conflict resolution. There are no right or wrong answers, and how you respond will in no way affect your grade. The survey is anonymous, and you do not need to put your name on it.

If you agree to participate, please sign below:

I understand why this research is being done. I understand how is may help me or other students and any discomforts it may cause me. I have been told that I do not have to give an answer if I do not want to and that I can stop the survey at any time for any reason. All the questions I had about this study have been answered. I would like to take part in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Minor Participant Date

_____

witness (Signature)

Appendix F
Parental Permission Form

September 1996

Dear Parent/Guardian:

During the school year Debra Baker and Karyn Lanham (research group) will be working on their action research paper for Saint Xavier University. We have chosen to look at Conflict Resolution. The purpose is to find out how students deal with interpersonal conflicts and than implement a plan to help improve their skills in this area. The program will start with student surveys, then an intervention, and then we will survey students again to see if their skills have improved.

We need your permission to use your child's results in our research data. The surveys are anonymous, and at no time will a student's name appear in the research.

The Conflict Resolution Program will be included into the curriculum. We will not be changing, but enhancing the curriculum and discipline procedures already being used.

If you give permission for your child to be included in the study please sign the slip and return to your child's school. You may phone Debra Baker at McCarty Elementary School or Karyn Lanham at Frost Jr. High with any questions about our research paper. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Debra Baker
Karyn Lanham

.....

I give permission for _____ to be included in the research. I understand my child's name will be kept anonymous.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

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Appendix G
Cooperative Learning Activity 1

Busted Sentences[11]

Grades 3-6

Materials: five envelopes for each group, word cards (see below)

Procedure:

Prepare envelopes with word cards in them as follows:

envelope 1: Spring, begun, eager, into

envelope 2: here, blinded, have, dashed, the

envelope 3: is, The, start, reading, The

envelope 4: sunlight, barking, I'm, cat, house

envelope 5: The, me, dogs, to

You will need a set of envelopes, one through five, for each group playing. If you can't group students exactly into groups of five, just give each group the five envelopes anyway. It helps to write all the word cards for one group in green, all the cards for another group in red, and so on. This will make it easier for you to keep track of the materials.

Adapted by permission of A&W Publishers, Inc. from *Developing Effective Classroom Groups* by Gene Stanford. Copyright © 1977, Hart Publishing Company, Inc.

1. Distribute envelopes to each group. Explain that each group is to construct five complete sentences without talking, gesturing, or signaling in any way. The only way to get a needed word is to have it passed to you by a group member.
2. Have the groups begin while you circulate as an observer. Interrupt if you see rule violations or signs of serious misunderstanding of the process. (In the latter case, nudge the group in the right direction.)
3. The sentences should be more or less these:

   Spring is here.

   The sunlight blinded me.

   The dogs have begun barking.

   I'm eager to start reading.

   The cat dashed into the house.

Discussion:

Did you keep an eye out for people in your group who needed help?

How did it feel when someone helped you? Didn't help you?

What did you learn from this activity?

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Appendix H
Cooperative Learning Activity 2

Inheritances[1]

Grades (K, 1), 2-6

Materials: inheritances survey sheet (see Appendix), inked stamp pads

Procedure:

1. Discuss what physical characteristics are inherited. Explain that there might be some that children don't know about:

   tongue rolling

   dimples

   widow's peak

   hitchhiker's thumb

   attached vs. unattached earlobes

2. Distribute the inheritances survey. Ask why it includes space for fingerprints; what do they have to do with inherited characteristics? Give students time to complete the survey forms, and then discuss them.

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Appendix I
Cooperative Learning Activity 3

Whom Do You Trust?

Grades K-6

Procedure:

1. In groups of five or six, have the students do a trust fall: the group forms a circle around one member, who closes eyes, falls in any direction, and is supported by the group. Repeat so that everyone gets an opportunity to be in the center.
2. Apropos of this activity, discuss trust and trustworthiness.
3. Discuss strangers, and emphasize being very cautious around them. With older students, develop a trustworthiness checklist of things to consider before trusting an unknown person.

Discussion:

Why shouldn't you talk to strangers?

Does that mean all strangers are bad?

How would you get to trust them?

What do you look for in a new person to decide if you can trust him or her?

Why is trust important in our classroom?

What could you do to show that you are trustworthy?

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Appendix J
Character Education Activity 1

The Universal Quality

Grades 3-6

Procedure:

Read the quote from the French philosopher Montaigne:

There never was in the world two opinions alike,
No more than two hairs or two grains.
The most universal quality is diversity.

Discussion:

What does *diversity* mean? What does *universal* mean?

What is Montaigne saying?

Do you agree?

What about the first line? Is that true? (You may need to explain the concept of hyperbole.)

In what ways is diversity good?

In what ways might it be bad?

What effect might diversity have on conflict?

How do you respond to people who are like you? Somewhat different? Very different?

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Appendix K
Character Education Activity 2

Prejudice Activities

These lessons are designed to help students better understand cognitively the nature of generalizing, stereotyping, and prejudice. As I mentioned earlier, it is not enough for students to have experiences that counter stereotypes and prejudices they have. They also need to acquire an understanding of the processes involved. Those activities in chapter five having to do with perception and frame of reference are valuable additions here. For older pupils, excellent supplements to these are lesson in critical reading skills, propaganda detection, critical TV viewing skills, and so on.

Prejudice Discussion

Grades K-4, (5, 6)

Materials: dictionaries, *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss

Procedure:

1. Write the term *prejudice* on the board, and define it. Have older students look it up in the dictionary.
2. Read *Green Eggs and Ham* to younger students (kindergarten through fourth grade) as an example of one kind of prejudice. (Some fifth and sixth graders won't be offended by the book if you stress the fact that you are reading it for a purpose.)

Discussion:

What kinds of prejudice do you know about?

What kinds are fairly harmless?

What kinds are very harmful?

Whom do they harm?

Could prejudice be beneficial? (See Whom Do You Trust, later in this chapter.)

What might cause a prejudice to develop?

What's the difference between prejudice and dislike?

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Appendix L
Character Education Activity 3

Three Musketeers

Grades 2-6

Materials: three musketeers sheet (see Appendix)

Procedure:

1. Students should work in groups of three. Distribute one worksheet to each group.
2. In the first section of the worksheet, the group should list three things that all the members of the group like; in the second, three things they all dislike.
3. In the third section, each group member should describe one way he or she differs from the other group members.

Discussion:

How did you decide what you liked and disliked?

Were there any groups that couldn't come to agreement?

What were some of your responses?

What does the phrase *all for one and one for all* mean?

Appendix M
Conflict Resolution Activity 1

I-Message

I _____
(feeling)

when you _____
(specific behavior)

because _____ .
(how it affects me)

Appendix N
Conflict Resolution Activity 2

Brainstorm Solutions Worksheet

The Problem: What can you do right now so that . . .

_____ & _____?
Child #1 gets what s/he needs — Child #2 gets what s/he needs

	Ideas	How we feel about the idea . . .	
		_____ name	_____ name
☐	_____	◯	◯
☐	_____	◯	◯
☐	_____	◯	◯
☐	_____	◯	◯
☐	_____	◯	◯
☐	_____	◯	◯
☐	_____	◯	◯

✓ Check the ideas you both like best.

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